

FAREWELL ADDRESS OF THE LATE PRESIDENT OF THE CANTERBURY CATHOLIC LITERARY SOCIETY.

At the meeting of this Society held on the 2nd inst., Mr. Maskell, the retiring President, delivered the following address. After having in a few preliminary remarks referred to the present state of the Society, and the progress made by it during the year, as well as thanked those gentlemen who had given it their assistance, he said:—

Now, is there anything in the progress of events since June last, or in the condition of Catholic affairs at the present moment, as far as we can tell, calculated to encourage us to be less "gloomy" than before? Has the world shown any disposition to be less antagonistic to the Catholic Church? Are Catholic principles less hated, Catholic maxims less execrated, Catholic practices less abused? Is more justice meted out to Catholics in any part of the world in 1884 than in 1883? And are we justified in believing that at last the tide of conflict is turning in our favour, and that the Church is at last in the way of swift victory. Let us see. First, turning to that great centre of Catholic veneration and affection—the metropolis of all Christianity,—what has happened since June last to His Holiness the Pope; then, he was a prisoner; now, he is a prisoner still. I see no improvement here, for his gates are barred as strongly as ever, and no sign has been vouchsafed that his gaolers are in the least relaxing the strictness of their guard; but, if this were all, I might perhaps be told that at least things were no worse: that in Rome, at least, the Church had held her own. You, gentlemen, are well aware how far this is true. It is not true. The news, month after month, has been that worse and worse attacks have been made on the Pope and the Church, until at last the climax seems to be near at hand. There is an institution in Rome which has existed three hundred years, and the like of which has never been seen in the world. Societies for the support of missionaries may be found in England and America;—societies upheld, doubtless, by vast subscriptions, and making a great parade of their activity and doings. But what are these to the Propaganda? Even the Protestant Press has been unanimous in the expression of regret at the action lately taken by the Italian Government. Regret, indeed, is all that they do express; indignation could not, of course, be expected from them. The confiscation of the property of Propaganda—the attempted destruction of the greatest institution in all the world for the spread of Christian faith, could not draw forth more than phrases such as this, taken from the London Times:—"It is to be regretted that the Court of Appeal at Rome could not discover cause for excusing the Propaganda" from the operation of the law. It is much that we should get even such civility as this. But now, what is it that has been done, and what will be its effect? It is not for me this evening to go into details; but, practically, what has been done has been a direct and wholesale confiscation by the Italian Government of the most sacred and important property of the Church in Italy, and the effect will as it appears, be the forced departure of His Holiness the Pope from Rome. Plainly put, it is not too much to say that we may expect, ere many months—perhaps weeks—are over, to see Leo XIII., the Vicar of Christ, a wanderer on the earth—driven from his proper home and seeking refuge wherever any king or emperor may grant it to him. I do not mean say that this is certain. His Holiness will doubtless exhaust all possible modes of action before taking so decisive a step as flight from Rome. Yet it is hard to see what else is indicated in that phrase of his in his last allocution:—"We know that our enemies have determined to fill the measure of outrage against the Roman Pontiff, until, from one difficulty to another, he is driven to the last extremity." "We foresee," says the Pope, "still harder trials, and we are ready to bear them." And, gentlemen, it may be our fate to read, any day, in the telegraphic intelligence from Europe, that the last extremity has come; that Leo XIII. has been driven into exile; that the Vatican has become the prey of the spoilers; that the Church has once more fled away into the desert—once more, for it will not be the first time; nor, indeed, must we be any more anxious for the ultimate result than were Catholics when the Popes were driven, centuries ago, to Avignon; when Pius VII. was a prisoner to the first Napoleon; when Pius IX. fled from the ruffian Garibaldi to take refuge with the King of Naples. We have no cause for anxiety in the end. But it would be absurd to imagine that, during the past year, the assault on the Church, in the person of Leo XIII., has been any less active than before. As I said just now, the Pope is a prisoner now as he was in 1883; but it is with this difference, that he is now compelled to seriously think of planning his escape, lest, from being a prisoner with a measure of nominal liberty, he may become the inmate of an actual dungeon, or, worse still, in danger of personal injury. Undoubtedly, gentlemen, you are as well aware as I am that such persecution as this defeats its own ends. Persecution is the life of the Church, and by the blood of martyrs is the Faith nourished. It was at the very time when Pius IX. had been forced to leave Rome, when a great cry of jubilation arose from the enemies of the Church, when "Popery" was stated to be at last crushed to the ground, it was at that very time that a new hierarchy was given to England, and Catholicity began to flourish there anew. It was the persecution in Ireland which gave to all the world so many thousands of noble missionaries. It was the persecution in France three years ago, and the persecution in Germany somewhat earlier, which permitted the establishment of monasteries, missions, Catholic settlements, in heretic or heathen lands. And such a persecution of the Pope as may drive him into apparently ignominious exile, will have, in the end, precisely the same effect. Yet it would be wrong to imagine that the enemies of the Church have been in the least instructed by the history of the past. Anti-Catholic feeling is just as ripe now as ever. In what are called cultured circles, amongst the educated and the intellectual, Catholics are very tolerably treated. No overt insult may be experienced; no expression of exultation at our trials may be openly put forth. But the feeling of hatred is still there; we are merely tolerated, simply because of the pretence of liberality which is so fashionable in the present day. I am not by any means sure that this is a good

thing for us. We might probably be much better off if the feeling against us were more forcibly expressed—more openly shown. Luckily, as I think, we have our share of persecution in the educational system of this country, for that helps to bind us together, and keep our muscles, as it were, constantly braced up. We might be worse off than we are, speaking from a Catholic point of view, if we had not something of the kind going on. But, leaving that aside, I would not have you imagine that the feeling of Protestants with regard to the Church is less strong than it used to be. They will, doubtless, flock to any of our public ceremonies, very often simply to gaze upon a peculiar and puzzling exhibition, sometimes, perhaps, in a kind and generous sympathy. Such an occasion as the founding of St. Patrick's College will attract them in crowds; even so ordinary a thing as a diocesan synod is thought worthy of being telegraphed all over the country with a sort of hint of mysterious ceremonial; and any public doings of ours are narrated with, I freely admit, a decent impartiality in the newspapers, just as if we were really much the same sort of people as anybody else. But we are no nearer the heart of the Protestant world than ever we were. Whenever there is any chance of a cut at us it is taken; and in the full and firm belief of the greatest part of our Protestant fellow-citizens we are deserving of only two things, contempt and detestation; or, if not of both, then of at least one of the two. I said just now that no overt attack is made upon us; and this is true, on the whole, for this country. For there is in New Zealand so very general a laxity of opinion upon matters of faith, a laxity which is growing very fast indeed, that really there are not many amongst us, outside the Catholic Church, who care more than the very least little bit (in the absence of some exciting cause) about religious differences. There have, however, been two queer little assaults delivered lately, the one under the leadership of a not very wise gentleman holding high ecclesiastical position in Dunedin. Archdeacon Edwards thought fit to publicly accuse the Catholics of Otago of refusing to contribute to the cause of charity. The Benevolent Association down there has not been properly supported as he thinks, by the Catholic clergy and laity, and his opinion was expressed (perhaps involuntarily) in such a way as to point to a grave dereliction of duty. The charge was not wisely made; the reply of His Lordship Dr. Moran was clear, unanswerable, crushing. The abstention of the Catholics of Otago was shown to be due, not to any want of charity on their part, but to a failure of justice on the part of the Association. Like all open attacks upon Catholics, this attack has failed, of course. Still, it has shown the continued existence of that anti-Catholic feeling of which I have been speaking; and doubtless, Archdeacon Edwards and his allies will take another opportunity of courting defeat as soon as possible. The other assault was less direct, and I only refer to it as illustrating the curious state of ignorance of Catholic affairs shown by (professedly) educated Protestants. A Presbyterian minister, running a tilt against the Salvation Army, made it one of his main charges that the Army resembled the Jesuits in being, what he wanted his readers to infer was a dangerous secret society. Nobody took much notice of this sally which, in itself, is simply absurd. But it is characteristic of the persistence of anti-Catholic feeling that a minister, whose business, one would think, it should be to study and inform himself of the truth, should repeat publicly such a worn-out slander against the great Catholic society. The actual power of intellect possessed by the minister in question I do not know and need not discuss. But, when men in his official position are unable to refrain from exhibitions of ignorance upon plain facts, how can we expect the great body of our Protestant fellow citizens to do anything else? In point of fact they are not one whit better informed, or more inclined to favour Catholic truth, than they have been in the past. Let us look for an instant at the condition of things in other directions; what improvement is noticeable as to Catholic questions? None, I fear, in France, where the anti-Christian war is being waged just as fiercely as ever; and where the indication points rather to an aggravation than to a relaxation of it. The Republicans who are now in power in France are not likely to hesitate or grow cold in their rage, but they have hitherto found some slight obstacle to their career in the conservation, such as it is, of the Senate or Upper House of Parliament. The French people have fallen into a sort of lethargic apathy, for which, doubtless, many causes might be given, but which is eminently calculated to give the ruffians who govern them plenty of scope for their active malice. The persecution of the Church in France is due as much to the laziness of the Catholics as to the energy of the infidels. Still, there have been some little remains of opposition, and they have been found chiefly in the Senate. The Government have been able in many instances to bear down this opposition and procure a majority in the Senate, but with some degree of trouble. And now it is announced that they are going to greatly reduce the powers of that body, so that as far as can be seen the condition of the Church is to be worse in the future than it has been in the past. In Germany there has really been a slight improvement. The May Laws which have for years been pressing so heavily upon Catholics have been somewhat relaxed, and a few bishops and priests have been able to return to their flocks. Still, the new state of things is not altogether satisfactory. The two greatest of the German bishops are still exiles, and the Government absolutely refuses to permit their return. Moreover, the relaxation which has been granted is due, not so much to any feeling on the part of Prince Bismarck, in favour of the Church or of toleration, as to his dread of Socialism and anarchy. The Catholic party in the German Parliament have been able to hold the balance of power; and Bismarck, in order to avoid ruin from the Socialists, has been simply forced to throw a sop to the Catholics. Whether the improved state of affairs will last for any time seems to depend greatly upon anything rather than a sense or justice and truth in the German authorities. If we turn to the United States, we find that, although there is in that country no active persecution the Church enjoys nothing more than toleration, whilst if we are to believe published statements the moral and social condition of the people generally is getting worse every year. In Belgium, the authorities, acting up to their Masonic principles, are continuing in the same way of violence and outrage which have marked their past career. In Spain, republican (that is,